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ABSTRACT

A study analyzed the responses of chief executive officers (CEOs) and company presidents to a leadership test and an organizational environment test, to determine whether these individuals' managerial approaches coincided with their characterizations of their organizations' environments. Subjects, CEOs or presidents of 65 randomly selected Indiana-based companies with gross annual sales of at least $5,000,000, were administered a version of Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard's LEAD test and also were surveyed regarding ten different characterizations of the organization's employees and environment. The respondents' average age was 49.8 years, and their average length of managerial time was 20.8 years. Results of the LEAD test indicated that these leaders were likely to adopt a "selling" approach, considered only marginally effective by the test's authors. The leaders' perception of their organizations' environments, as reflected in the second part of the survey, indicated a need for a "manager-as-developer" approach. Findings suggest that these leaders may be incorrect in their choice of managerial style based on their own perceptions of their organizations. (Three tables and eight figures are included, and 15 notes are attached.) (NKA)

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ROADBLOCKS TO CHANGE: EXECUTIVE BEHAVIORS VERSUS EXECUTIVE PERCEPTIONS

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ABSTRACT

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Thomas E. Harris, Ph.D.

The results of a survey of CEO's and presidents of organizations responses to the LEAD situational leadership test and a ten factor organizational environment test are reported. The difference between the situational leadership style used and the leaders' perception of their management environment is shown and conclusions are drawn regarding the validity of current criticisms of leader behavior. Based on this survey, leaders may be incorrect in their choice of managerial style based on the leaders' own perception of their organization.

ROADBLOCKS TO CHANGE: EXECUTIVE BEHAVIOR VERSUS EXECUTIVE PERCEPTIONS

Thomas E. Harris, Ph.D.

The importance of leadership to the success of an organization is well documented.[1] Stories about the various actions taken by successful leaders are repeated within the organization and often create a standard of excellence for other organizational members to follow.[2] For all the examples of successful leaders, there are a large number of managerial behaviors which have come under increased attack for diminishing growth, team behavior and company loyalty.[3] Traditional managerial activities are often seen as a hindrance to the very growth and productivity they are intended to enhance.[4] As an antidote, leaders and managers have been called on to create and maintain on-going, informal contact with their subordinates rather than lead by remote control.[5]

This contrast between leaders who obviously seem to behave in very positive ways, and those who have been severely criticized, provided the rationale for conducting the research reported here. The goal was to see if high-level managers were using traditional approaches which might be out-of-touch with the environmental demands. Although there are numerous anecdotes regarding managerial and leadership excellence and a equal number of examples of less than adequate performance, little research has been conducted to see if there actually is a tendency by leaders to use managerial behaviors which might not be in line with the requirements of their workforce or operating environment.

A group of Chief Executive Officers (CEO's) or company presidents was chosen and asked to indicate: (1) how they currently managed using a situational leadership test; and (2) how they viewed their managing environment. The goal of the study was to determine if this group's managerial approaches were in agreement with their characterizations of their organization's environment.

PROCEDURE

2,014 companies were identified in Indiana with gross annual sales of at least $5 million. The companies were listed by their primary business activity using the Standard Industrial Classification Codes (SIC) and then listed in alphabetical order within the classification. Ten percent of the companies (201) were randomly selected and the CEO's or presidents identified. Since these individuals are in a position to indicate their own procedure for managing and would be able to characterize their perspective of the operating environment, this group of subjects provided a broad-based sample to test the generalizations being made regarding management style.

The survey form requested demographic information and included a version of the LEAD test developed by Hersey and Blanchard.[6] In addition, ten different characterizations of the organization's employees and environment were presented based on the conclusions offered by Bradford and Cohen.[7] The survey form was pretested on two managerial groups. Neither the middle management seminar (23 people) nor the manufacturing supervision session (18 people) experienced difficulty in using the form.

RESULTS

Of the 201 surveys distributed, 83 were returned (41% response rate). For various reasons, 18 survey forms could not be used. The remaining 65 fully completed forms provided the information for the reported results. The responding businesses represent a broad cross-section of the SIC categories as shown in Table I. The percentages of the responses by category is roughly equivalent to the original breakdown of the 2,014 Indiana businesses identified with sales in excess of $5 million. Public utilities are the only exception since there were no responses. No explanation is apparent and none of the 18 unusable survey forms were from utilities.

-Insert Table I-

The average number of individuals employed by the organizations is

-Insert Table II-

386.9. The sample includes a broad range of sizes as table II indicates.

The sample's diversity is further emphasized by the respondents' ages which range from 28 to 64 with an average age of 49.8. The CEO's or presidents have been managing for an average of 20.8 years with the range being between 3 and 40 years.

-Insert Table III-

No follow-up was attempted with non-responding organizations. The respondents were provided the opportunity to receive the results of the survey and 41 individuals requested the information.

LEADERSHIP STYLE

Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Test (LEAD) is based on the premise that different leadership approaches should be used

depending on the requirements of the situation. They define leadership as "the process of influencing the activities of an individual or group in efforts toward goal achievement in a given situation."[8] In determining the individual's particular approach to a leadership situation, LEAD uses the traditional divisions of task-oriented and relationship-oriented behaviors, but focuses on the subordinate's ability and willingness to do a particular activity. This "task maturity" is recognized by Hersey and Blanchard as a "catch-all" for several variables the leader must be able to take into account given the particular employee or task. The interrelationship between the variables and the needed leadership behavior is broadly outlined in Figure 1. Since LEAD deals with "any situation where someone is trying to influence the behavior of another or group,"[9] the test provides a useful unifying examination for the leadership behaviors in this study.

-Insert Figure 1-

The basic leadership choices for the respondents are shown in Figure 2. As a cross-reference with Figure 1 will indicate, the major

-Insert Figure 2-

style choice was high task and high relationship which falls in situation 2. Selling is the leaders' likely choice 46% of the time. At the opposite end of the results, only 6% chose situation 4 of low relationship and low task which would be the delegating posture for the leader. Participating, as represented by high relationship and low task-oriented behaviors, was selected 26% of the time. High task and low relationship, or telling, is used in 22% of the situations which leaves selling as the most likely choice when dealing with subordinates.

At this point, one would be hard pressed to draw any specific conclusions beyond the fact that the leaders do not seem to be comfortable with backing out of the decision making process through delegation, and they are most likely to be involved in the goal setting of individuals or groups while providing high levels of socioemotional support through selling. The leaders are closely divided on a second, or back-up choice, between participating, which is usually seen as having a high implicit trust in people, and telling, where the leader has well defined methods which the subordinates should follow.[10]

Additional information about the leaders is provided by LEAD since each managerial decision in the test also offers choices which have a varying likelihood for success. By weighing the leadership behavior with the highest probability for success with a +2, the behavior with the least likelihood for success with a -2, the second best alternative with a +1, and the third with a -1, the leadership style adaptability profile for each leader can be established.[11] If the leaders consistently chose the least likely alternative for success, which would be a surprise given the demographics of this survey, their score would be a -24. The perfect leader, who also somehow eluded the sample, would have a score of +24.

As shown on Figure 3, the actual range was from -5 to +20 with preponderance of scores falling between +1 and +7. Interestingly, only

-Insert Figure 3-

three leaders scored in the minus area. Hersey and Blanchard report:

> Based on a sample of over twenty thousand middle managers from many different kinds of organizations from some fourteen countries, we found that the effectiveness scores of these subjects (over 83

percent), who have responded to the LEAD-Self prior to reading or participating in Situational Leadership training, fall between -6 and +6.[12]

This test of style adaptability reflects the leader's own willingness to look at each situation and make choices rather than adopting a telling, selling, participating, or delegating posture in every case. As can be seen in Figure 3, the leaders participating in this survey, with the possible exception of those scoring in the upper teens, could benefit from a greater understanding of style adaptability.

LEADER'S PERCEPTION

Managing for Excellence, by Bradford and Cohen, outlines three possible management styles that are likely to be used. They are not concerned with the actual situational correctness as much as the manager's view of their jobs in relation to their subordinates. There exists, they argue, a basic difference between traditional management practices and the type needed for organizational development. Basing their views on a careful review of the current studies of management, they identify three types of managerial activity.

Many managers have become accustomed to using an heroic approach to their jobs. Whenever problems occur, the manager is the one who will provide the answers or coordinate the various individuals or units involved. *This heroic management style works, but it does not encourage development or excellence.* Instead, it causes reliance on the manager who is acting out a self-concept of being tough, reliable, and able to handle situations. The manager becomes a cross between John Wayne and the Lone Ranger through the use of behaviors which centralize the

manager's importance and thereby diminishes the growth of subordinates. As Figure 4 indicates, the process creates a self-fulfilling prophecy regarding employee dependence. Bradford and Cohen are not suggesting

--Insert Figure 4--

these two types of management--manager-as-technician and manager-as-conductor--cannot succeed. In fact, the manager-as-technician, as the person promoted from within, or brought in because of some specific expertise, has all the answers and will take-over any situation. As long as employees are not expected to take a great deal of initiative or responsibility, this style can work well. The manager-as-conductor assists individuals or units in working together and this can prevent conflicts and establish a smooth work flow.

> In organizations (or situations within units) characterized by complex tasks, highly interdependent subordinates' work, a constantly changing environment, and competent subordinates, both the technician and conductor models are likely to prevent excellence, even though each may produce adequate performance. Since both styles emphasize the manager having the answers and being in control, they overuse the task abilities of the leader, and under utilize the competencies of the subordinates. Heroic over concentration of responsibility reduces the organization's chances to tap subordinates' talent fully.[13]

Bradford and Cohen argue for a third style called manager-as-developer which is postheroic. This is the style used by the excellent leaders Bradford and Cohen studied.

They provide ten characteristics to guide the leader and manager in

determining the style demanded by the environment in which they are managing. The ten characteristics are:

I. subordinates work independently

II. subordinates do simple tasks

III. environment is stable

IV. subordinates have low technical knowledge compared to boss

V. subordinate commitment not needed for success

VI. subordinates do complex tasks

VII. subordinates require considerable coordination

VIII. environment is changing

IX. subordinates have high technical knowledge

X. subordinate commitment necessary for excellence[14]

How these characteristics divide into style demands for the leader is indicated in Figures 5, 6, and 7.

Each leader surveyed was provided the choice of: 0=does not describe my organization; 1=true in selected instances; 2=true in majority of instances; and 3=represents an accurate description. By compiling the totals, the profiles of the surveyed organization's environments can be plotted and the required leadership response can shown.

Figure 5 summarizes the responses for the manager-as-technician profile. Two of the factors which justify a technician response, subordinates work independently and the environment is stable, are ranked high by the leaders. However, the remaining choices would do not call

-Insert Figure 5-

for a reliance on the technician approach. Figure 6 plots the leaders'

responses as they relate to the manager-as-conductor approach. Although there is some justification for the conductor approach, as shown under the categories of the environment is stable, subordinates do complex

-Insert Figure 6-

tasks, and subordinates require considerable coordination, the response profile does not provide a strong justification for this approach either.

The characteristics of the organization's environment, as viewed by the leaders, do call for the manager-as-developer approach as shown in

-Insert Figure 7-

Figure 7. In each of the five categories, the 1, 2, and 3 responses greatly outweigh the 0, or does not describe my organization, choice. To the degree Bradford and Cohen are correct in assessing the factors which

-Insert Figure 8-

call for the developer approach, this group of leaders clearly identifies the manager-as-developer as the best approach when their organization's environment is considered.

DISCUSSION

Although the selection of CEOs and presidents who would receive the survey forms was randomly accomplished, the returning of the surveys for evaluation cannot be construed as random. So, the results cannot be projected as representative of the entire population. At the same time, the results do point to some very important issues initially raised by the current criticisms of leader behavior. In addition, there is a useful cross-section of organizations and leaders represented.

Based on the LEAD test, these leaders are likely to adopt a "selling" approach, which, according to Hersey and Blanchard, was only

marginally effective given the situational demands. The leaders' perception of their organization's environment, as reflected in the second half of the survey, would indicate a need for a manager-as-developer approach. Figure 1, which outlines the four types of leadership behaviors tested by LEAD indicates, shows these leaders should be relying on the components of situation 3 (participating) or 4 (delegating) based on their own assessment of the situational demands. So, the leaders may be using inappropriate responses.

No suggestion is being made that the LEAD test and Bradford and Cohen's analysis are *directly* correlated. But, the information does provide a very useful comparison of what leaders do in specific situations and how they view their organization. As an attempt to determine if leaders are prone to use behaviors which do not lead to the full development of employees or enhance the potential for change, this survey does offer some useful conclusions.

Why, then, have these leaders not moved to a more effective leadership style? While Hersey and Blanchard would undoubtedly say these leaders simply lacked the benefits of one of their courses or books, the analysis by Bradford and Cohen might be even more on the mark. Leaders receive a great deal of reinforcement either by having all the answers (manager-as-technician), or at least being asked for their input on certain issues, or orchestrating the behaviors of the other managers in the organization (manager-as-conductor). So, although the leaders may have high regard for their employees and a clear vision of the operating environment, giving up control in favor of development might be difficult.

CONCLUSION

The leaders in this survey favor a high relationship and high task style of leadership. Their perception of their organization's environment would seem to call for a different approach. These results indicate that the current criticisms of leadership behavior have validity when a cross-section of CEO's or presidents is examined.

Additional research needs to be conducted to include the other managers within each organization. The leaders requesting copies of this study have been contacted to see if they would be interested in an examination of the managing profile of their entire organization and on-going research has begun.

Studies should also be conducted regarding the effectiveness of the LEAD instrument as it correlates to change management. Although there are studies supporting the LEAD instrument,[15] additional research would be useful. The same observation is in order with regard to the manager-as-developer approach. The categories provided by Bradford and Cohen are useful, but the ten different elements need to be further studied. As used in this study, the categories do provide an excellent division of leader perceptions but further studies would make the application of these particular categories even clearer.

Obviously leaders are not the only factors in organizational success or failure. They do, however, have a major impact on how the different elements of the organization function and, based on this study, there is reason to call for a reexamination of how they approach their jobs if they are seeking employee involvement in implementing change.

ENDNOTES

[1]Thomas J. Peters and Robert H. Waterman, In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best-Run Companies (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), p. 26.

[2]Tom Peters and Nancy Austin, A Passion for Excellence: The Leadership Difference (New York: Random House, 1985).

[3]Richard T. Pascale and Anthony G. Anthos, The Art of Japanese Management: Applications for American Executives (New York: Warner Books, 1981), p. 25, ff.

[4]David L. Bradford and Allan R. Cohen, Managing for Excellence: The Guide to Developing High Performance in Contemporary Organizations (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1984).

[5]See, for example, John P. Kotter, The General Managers (New York: The Free Press, 1982) or Roger Fritz, Rate Yourself As A Manager (Englewood Cliffs; Prentice-Hall, 1985), pp. 78-83.

[6]Paul Hersey and Kenneth H. Blanchard, Management of Organizational Behavior: Utilizing Human Resources, 3rd ed (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1977), pp. 85-131.

[7]Bradford and Cohen, pp. 56, ff.

[8]Hersey and Blanchard, p. 84.

[9]Hersey and Blanchard, p. 105.

[10]Hersey and Blanchard, pp. 107, 226-234.

[11]In addition to the research cited by Hersey and Blanchard, two studies support LEAD's accuracy. Robert K. Hambleton and Robert Gumpert, "The Validity of Hersey and Blanchard's Theory of Leader Effectiveness," Group and Organizational Studies, 7 (1982), pp. 225-42; and Paul Hersey,

Anthony L. Angelini, and Steve Carakushansky, "The Impact of Situational Leadership and Classroom Structure on Learning Effectiveness," Group and Organizational Studies, 7 (1982), pp. 216-24.

[12]Hersey and Blanchard, p. 231.

[13]Bradford and Cohen, pp. 55-6.

[14]Bradford and Cohen, p. 56.

[15]Hersey and Blanchard, Management of Organizational Behavior: Utilizing Human Resources, 4th ed (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1982), pp. 149-175.

TABLE 1

TYPE OF BUSINESS ACTIVITY FOR RESPONDING ORGANIZATIONS*

	Number	Percent of Total
Manufacturing	21	32.3%
Services	19	29.2%
Retail Trade	16	24.6%
Construction	6	9.2%
Agriculture	5	7.7%
Banking	5	7.7%
Insurance	5	7.7%
Durables(wholesale trade)	4	6.2%
Real Estate	3	4.6%
Communications	2	3.1%
Finance	2	3.1%
Food	2	3.1%
Mining	2	3.1%
Non-durables(wholesale trade)	2	3.1%
Public Utilities	0	0

*13 managers indicated several primary business activities.

TABLE 2

TOTAL EMPLOYMENT OF ORGANIZATIONS

(Individuals employed)
(Average 386.9)

16 - 1	150 - 4
18 - 1	180 - 1
19 - 1	225 - 1
26 - 1	250 - 2
33 - 1	275 - 1
35 - 2	310 - 1
40 - 2	350 - 1
43 - 1	400 - 2
50 - 1	450 - 2
52 - 1	500 - 1
55 - 1	550 - 1
60 - 1	800 - 3
90 - 1	2100 - 1
96 - 1	2600 - 1
105 - 1	3000 - 1

TABLE 3

PROFILE OF MANAGERS

AGE-NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS		YEARS AS MANAGER-NUMBER*
28 - 1	(Average: 49.8 yrs)	(Average: 20.8) 3 - 2
30 - 1		5 - 2
32 - 1		6 - 1
34 - 1		8 - 1
35 - 1		10 - 5
36 - 1		11 - 1
37 - 4		12 - 2
39 - 1		13 - 1
41 - 2		15 - 4
42 - 3		16 - 1
43 - 3		18 - 3
44 - 2		20 - 8
45 - 2		21 - 3
46 - 3		23 - 4
47 - 2		24 - 1
48 - 4		25 - 6
49 - 2		26 - 2
50 - 1		28 - 1
51 - 1		29 - 2
52 - 2		30 - 5
53 - 2		31 - 1
54 - 1		34 - 2
55 - 3		35 - 1
56 - 2		37 - 1
57 - 3		40 - 2
58 - 1		
59 - 2		*3 no responses
60 - 4		
61 - 2		
62 - 1		
63 - 2		
64 - 1		

FIGURE 1

LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR - APPROPRIATENESS

RELATIONSHIP ORIENTED BEHAVIOR, CONSIDERATE, INTERPERSONAL

HIGH

SITUATION 3 PARTICIPATING High relationship & low task MODERATELY HIGH ON TASK MATURITY, NOT FULLY WILLING Subordinate needs support, indications of rewards for achievement--no direct behavior by superior, because subordinate knows how to do the job.	SITUATION 2 SELLING High task & high relationship LOW TASK MATURITY, BUT WILLING AND ABLE TO DO TASK Leader is both task-directive & openly considerate & relationship oriented. Leader provides direction & keeps subordinate's willingness to do new challenge high.
SITUATION 4 DELEGATING Low task & low relationship HIGH TASK MATURITY Subordinate needs almost no direction and little support. Leader uses interpersonal relationship behaviors for quality of superior-subordinate relationship.	SITUATION 1 TELLING High task & low relationship LOW TASK MATURITY Subordinate needs clear & specific instructions to learn to do job. Leader's willingness to take time & effort acts as evidence of concern--not impersonal but task oriented.

LOW

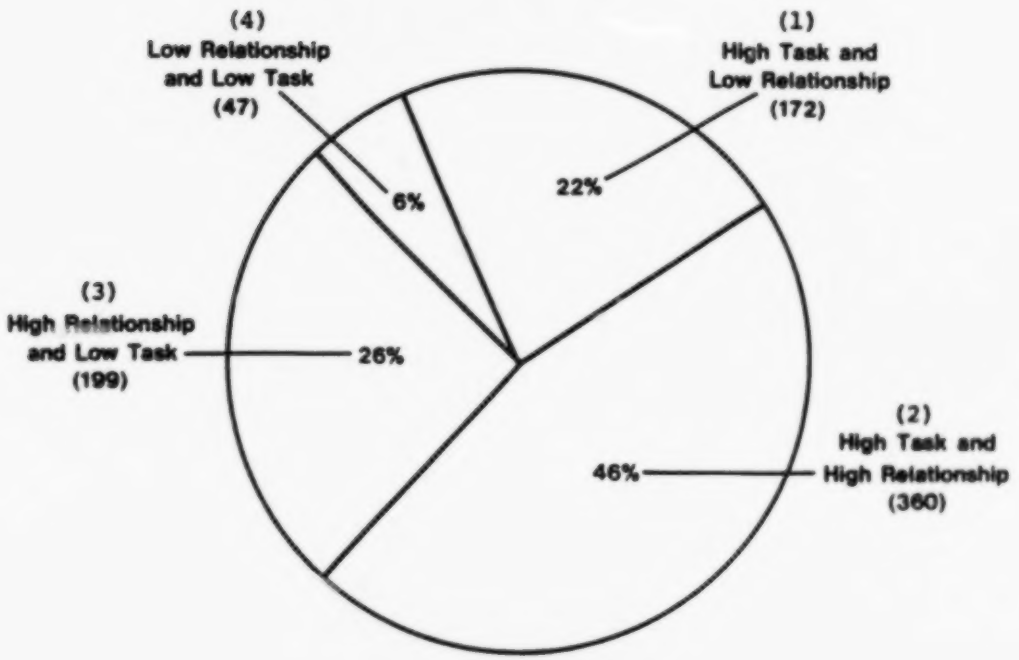
HIGH

TASK-ORIENTED BEHAVIOR, DIRECTIVE, INIATING

The Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Grid

FIGURE 2

BASIC LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR STYLES



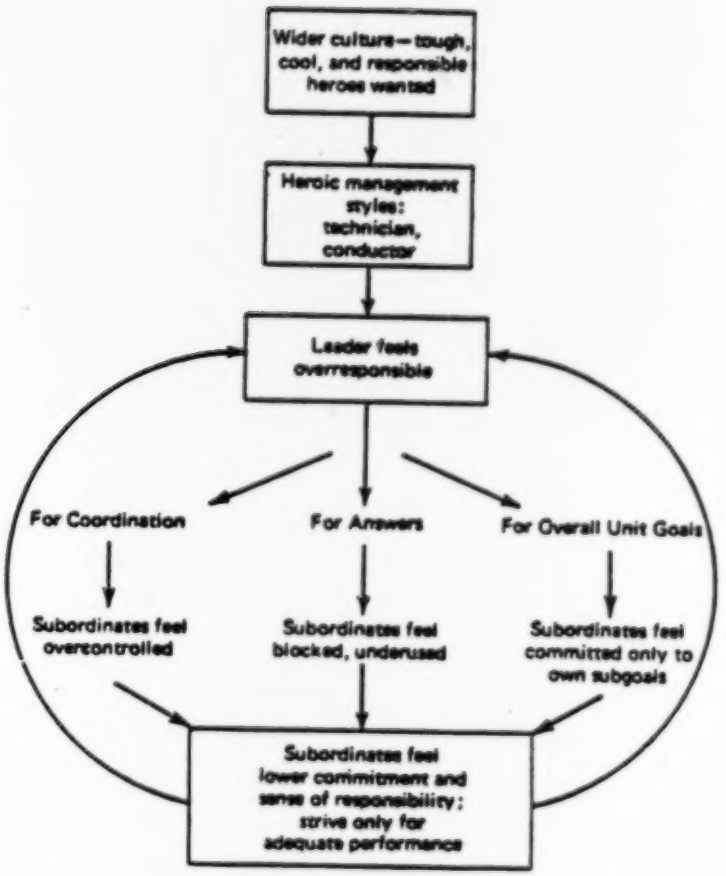
Total Responses 778

FIGURE 3

MANAGEMENT STYLE ADAPTABILITY

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10	+11	+12	+13	+14	+15	+16	+17	+18	+19	+20
(1)			(2)			(3)	(3)	(4)	(3)	(7)	(7)	(4)	(3)	(4)	(2)	(4)	(4)	(3)	(2)	(3)	(2)	(2)	(1)		(1)

FIGURE 4


Wider culture—tough, cool, and responsible heroes wanted
Heroic management styles: technician, conductor
Leader feels overresponsible
For Coordination
For Answers
For Overall Unit Goals
Subordinates feel overcontrolled
Subordinates feel blocked, underused
Subordinates feel committed only to own subgoals
Subordinates feel lower commitment and sense of responsibility; strive only for adequate performance

From: Bradford and Cohen, p. 57.

FIGURE 5

MANAGER-AS-TECHNICIAN

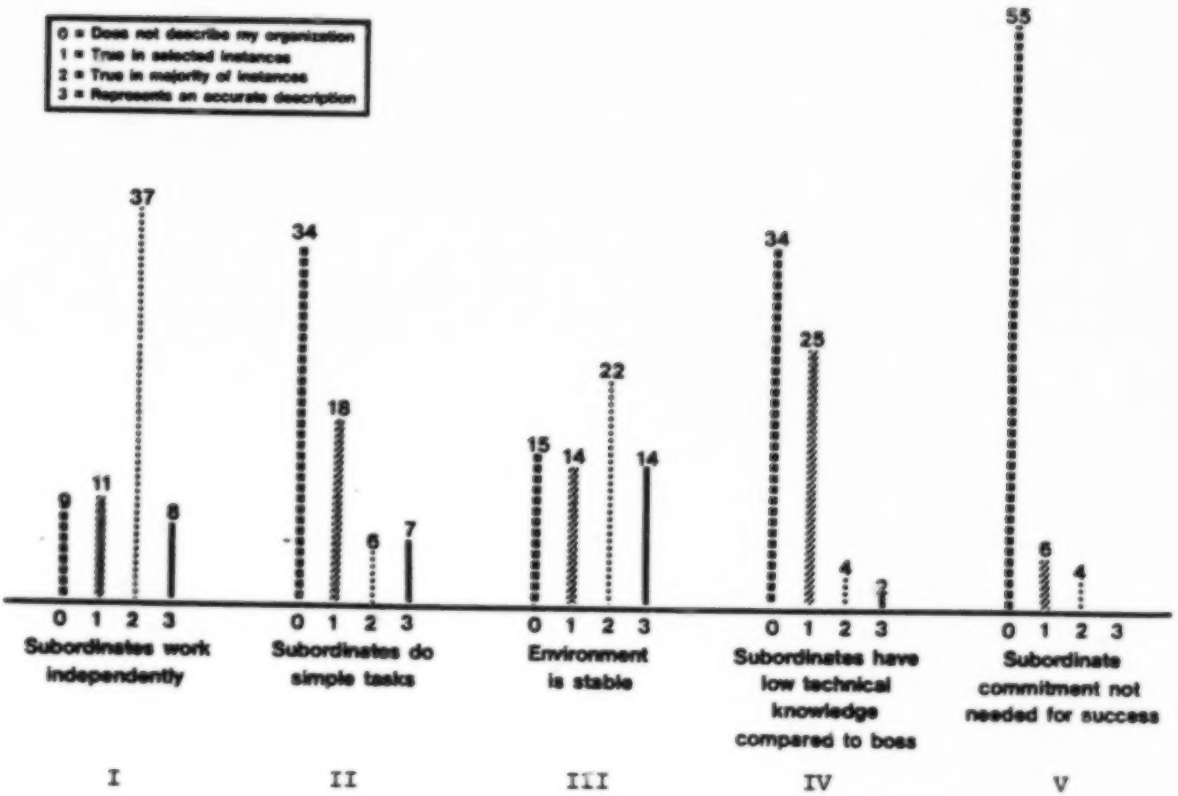


FIGURE 6

MANAGER-AS-CONDUCTOR

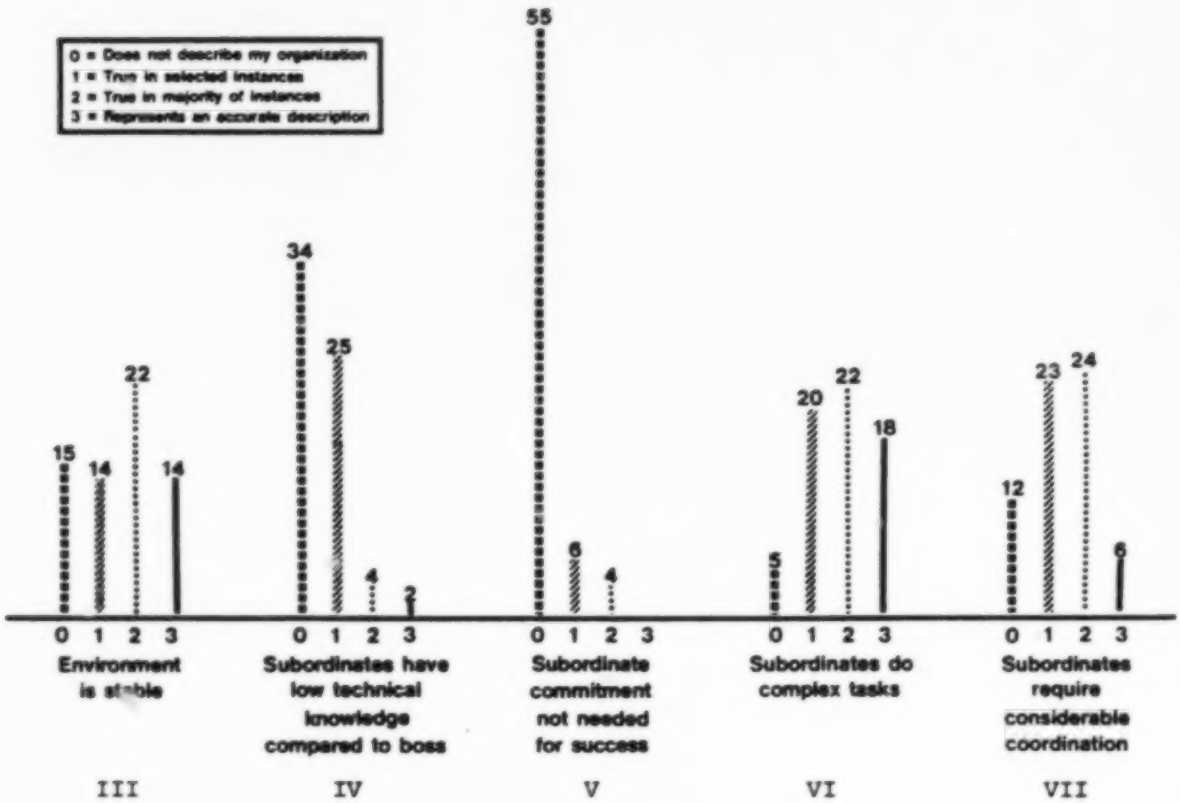


FIGURE 7

MANAGER-AS-DEVELOPER

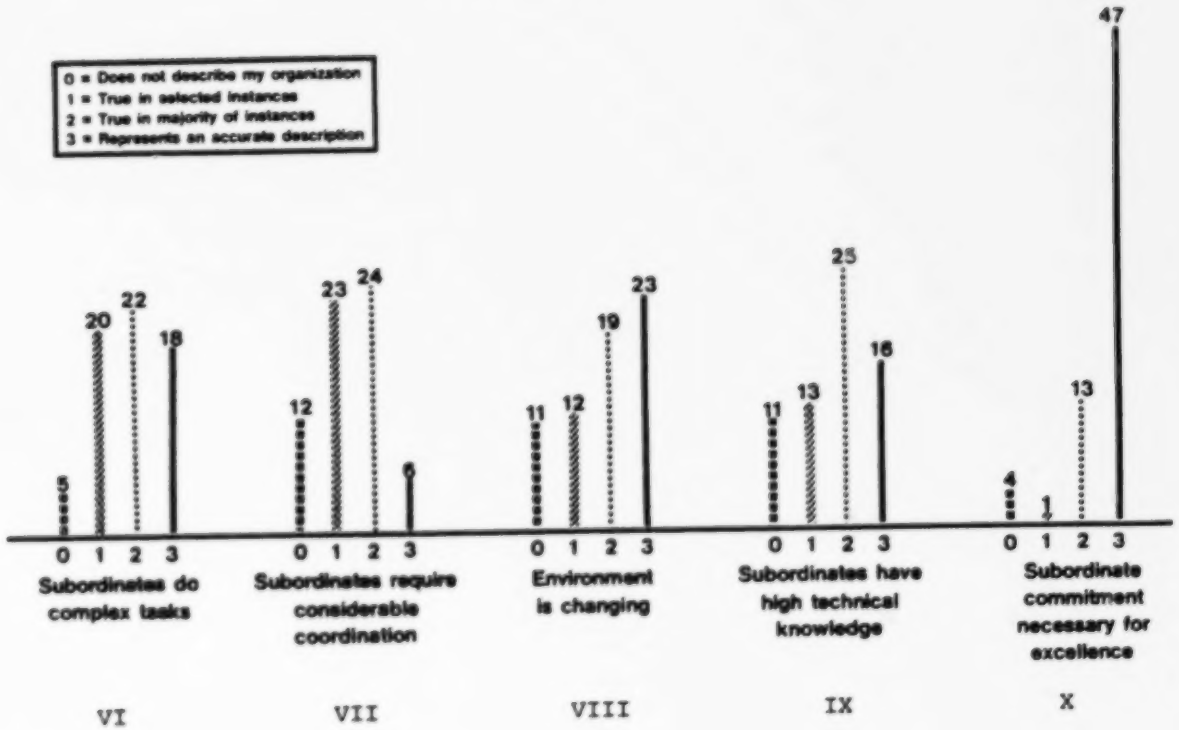


FIGURE 8

SUM OF RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ABOUT ORGANIZATION'S ENVIRONMENT